

SPLASH 2004: NOAA Ship McArthur Weekly Science Report

2 July 2004

Jay Barlow, Cruise Leader

SCIENCE SUMMARY: Saturday, 27 June - Wednesday, 30 June

We are off! Thanks to the hard work of many people, the SWFSC SPLASH cruise is away from the dock and has started work. Special thanks go to Jason Appler, Annette Henry, Jim Cotton, Susan Chivers, Valerie Andreassi, Karen Handschuh, and Jim Carretta (back in California) and to all the officers and crew of the McArthur II for making us ready to sail.

Our week started on Sunday as we pulled way from the pier at the Pacific Marine Center, leaving the old McArthur tied up behind us. Everyone was happy about that part. Pre-cruise training in Seattle actually started several days before, with small boat safety training, and training in species ID, data recording, photo-ID, and biopsy. We sailed through Ballard Locks into Puget Sound, where we continued to drill on small boat safety and operations all day. We launched AR-1 (the Mac's rigid-hulled inflatable boat or RHIB) at 0720 on Monday, and the McArthur proceeded to the fuel dock while biologists on AR-1 worked on biopsy target practice. After the McArthur II finished refueling, shortly after noon, we brought AR-1 aboard and proceeded to Shilshoal Marina for a final mail pickup and drop-off. We were underway with practice marine mammal observations from 1630 until dark, and we transited through the Straits of Juan de Fuca during the night.

On Tuesday morning we began marine mammal operations in earnest. We lined up on a trackline to Shiftsure Bank just NE of Cape Flattery, but unfortunately, a fog bank was sitting where the humpbacks should have been. Further offshore, we broke out of the fog and headed towards La Perouse Bank off southern Vancouver Island. There we found whales. Lots of humpbacks! We continued to work a large aggregation of about 35 whales for the rest of Monday. Unfortunately, very few whales were fluking up, and we had problems with our biopsy tips, so the first day was not as successful as it would have been. However, many of the whales were lunge-feeding and breaching, and we got some great pictures for the photo-album.

Weather on Wednesday was not as conducive to marine mammal surveys with winds blowing a steady Beaufort 5 most of the day. Still, we were able to find and work with a couple of small humpback groups off of central Vancouver Island. The small boat operations on the McArthur II have been going extremely smoothly, much to the credit of the deck crew here. Todd Chandler has been fully certified as a Scientist Coxswain and is out today without adult supervision. Also, the acoustics crew got their new array wet yesterday, after having chased out all the gremlins that live in their system during winter. The end of Wednesday brought a vocal group of sperm whales to provide the ultimate test of the acoustic system....and Julie's nerves.

Holly Fearnbach and Allan Ligon have been working together (for long hours) to set up the photographic archiving, printing, and data-basing system that we will be using on this cruise. So far, we are totally digital. Our goal is to produce a finished humpback whale catalog by the end of the cruise, and I have no doubt that we will succeed. But first, we have to find more whales

Sightings and Effort Summary for Marine Mammals

Date	Start/Stop Time	Position	Total Distance	Avg. Beaufort
062904	0606	N48:28.74 W124:36.03	28.3 nmi	3.2
	1403	N48:31.88 W125:39.91		
063004	0646	N49:01.46 W126:13.76	95.7 nmi	4.9
	1950	N49:36.63 W127:31.32		

Code	Species	Total Number
022	Lagenorhynchus obliquidens	1
046	Physeter macrocephalus	1
076	Megaptera novaeangliae	6
	TOTAL	8

Photo-Identifications

Species	Weekly	Cumulative
Humpback whale		
Catalog-quality Flukes	9	9
Other photos	23	23
Steller sea lion	1	1

Biopsies

Species	Weekly	Cumulative
Humpback whale	3	3
Dall's porpoise	1	1

Oceanographic Operations

Date	Number CTDs
6/27	0
6/28	0
6/29	1
6/30	1